



ELECTION FOCUS 2008



August 21, 2008

No. 13

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consistently ranks among the top 10 voter concerns. Where the presumed presidential candidates, Democrat Barack Obama and Republican John McCain, stand on immigration could determine who wins the 2008 election -- partly because many Hispanics, the largest minority group in the United States, are expected to go to the polls.

[Immigration Remains Important Campaign Issue in United States \(08-20-2008\)](#)

Outcome of U.S. presidential race could depend on it

The economy may top pollsters' lists of critical 2008 U.S. election campaign issues, but immigration is not far behind. In surveys, it



Barack Obama and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa appear at the League of United Latino American Citizens in Washington in July.

[Obama, McCain Compete in Wooing Hispanic Voters \(08-19-2008\)](#)

Hispanics' growing numbers, influence could be decisive in a close election

Hispanics, a rapidly growing segment of the U.S. population, could play a deciding role in a close presidential election, and campaigns are making enormous efforts to attract those potential voters and turn them out on Election Day. Efforts range from speeches delivered before major Hispanic organizations, to creation of new Spanish-language campaign Web sites, to huge budgets for advertising -- mainly television spots -- aimed at Hispanic voters. Hispanics now account for some 9 percent of the U.S. electorate and are the nation's fastest-growing minority group. A U.S. Census Bureau report released August 14 projects their numbers will nearly triple by the year 2050, to about one-third of the population.



John McCain campaigns at the 79th annual League of United Latin American Citizens convention in Washington in July.

[Economics Continues to Dominate Presidential Campaign \(08-15-2008\)](#)

Candidates use advertising to criticize each other's economic plans

The 2006 midterm elections, in which dissatisfaction with the war in Iraq helped Democrats gain control of Congress, seemed to indicate that foreign policy would dominate the 2008 campaign. But that has not been the case, and as Election Day nears it seems the economy will remain the dominant issue on voters' minds. As the number of deaths in Iraq has declined and the coverage of the war by the news media has decreased, Americans are less concerned about the situation overseas and more concerned about their economic situation at home. Economic concerns commonly dictate voters' choices in American elections. "Most elections are pocketbook elections," NBC News political director Chuck Todd told journalists at the Foreign Press Center in December 2007, "unless the pocketbook's full or unless a war is going badly." (See ["Voters, Candidates Shifting Their Attention to Economic Issues."](#))

[Congressional Candidates Take Campaigns to Facebook, MySpace \(08-14-2008\)](#)

Social networking sites are new frontier in Virginia 2nd's political landscape

Virginia Senate hopefuls Jim Gilmore and Mark Warner grew up in a world without Facebook or MySpace. But now both have major presences on social networking Web sites. "It is taking these tools and giving people a way to connect with the campaign," says Jesse Mallory, who handles field communications ...

Blogs at America.gov - CAMPAIGN TRAIL TALK

<http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/>

Provides running commentary and information on the 2008 elections in the United States. This blog keeps readers up to date on news, rumors and political chatter surrounding thousands of political races. Readers may ask questions about the electoral process, post their comments about the candidates, and generally guide the discussion.

From the blog:

[Polls give McCain good news](#) - By Michelle Austein, 20 August 2008

Since primaries concluded in early June, presumed Democratic nominee Barack Obama has narrowly led Republican John McCain in nearly every national poll. But polls released this week show the tide might be turning, which is good news for McCain.

[Campaign Trail Talk is taking you to the conventions!](#) - By Michelle Austein, 19 August 2008

The major parties are putting together the finishing touches on what will be the largest American political gatherings in four years. Both Democrats and Republicans will review their political platforms, celebrate their parties' histories and officially name their candidates for president.

[Candidates discuss faith and social issues](#) - By Michelle Austein, 18 August 2008

Appearing together on the campaign trail for the first time in the general election, presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama briefly stood side by side at a forum to address topics rarely discussed on the 2008 campaign trail – faith and values.

[Candidates keeping watch on Russia and Georgia](#) - By Michelle Austein, 15 August 2008

U.S. presidential candidates continue to pay close attention to the conflict in Georgia, with both campaigns urging an end to hostilities and the withdrawal of Russian forces from Georgian territory. Presumed Republican nominee John McCain has been more vocal in his criticism of Russia, commenting at press conferences, publishing an [op-ed](#) in the *Wall Street Journal* and asking two campaign allies — Senators Joe Lieberman and Lindsey Graham — to visit Georgia on his behalf.

Daily updated information is available at a special **U.S. Elections page** at:
<http://uspolitics.america.gov/uspolitics/elections/>

POLLS

[Daily Presidential Tracking Poll](#) - Rasmussen Reports, August 20, 2008

The Rasmussen Reports daily Presidential Tracking Poll for Wednesday shows Barack Obama attracting 45% of the vote while John McCain earns 42%. When "leaners" are included, it's Obama 47% and McCain 46%.

[49% Say Hillary Likely to Overshadow Obama at Convention](#) - Rasmussen Reports, August 19, 2008

Nearly half of U.S. voters (49%) think it is at least somewhat likely that Hillary Clinton will overshadow the Democrats' presumptive presidential nominee Barack Obama at the party's national political convention next week. Twenty-three percent (23%) say it is Very Likely. Even 44% of Democrats think it is at least somewhat likely to happen, including 18% who say it is Very Likely, according to a new Rasmussen Reports national telephone survey.

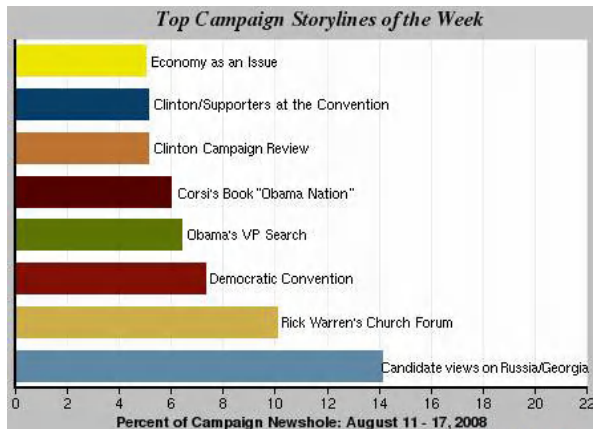
[Conventions Typically Result in Five-Point Bounce](#) - Gallup Poll, August 20, 2008

To the extent history is a guide, Barack Obama and John McCain can both expect to see some increase in voter support after their nominating conventions, an effect observed after nearly all of the 22 national conventions since 1964. The median increase has been 5 percentage points.

[Getting More Out of the Polls](#) - By James E. Campbell. Center for Politics, August 14, 2008

Political observers have become more sophisticated in their reading of polls in recent years. They know enough now not to read too much into summer polls. Poll leaders in June are not any more likely to win than their opponents who trail them in the summer polls. By the time of the conventions, though, polls become more meaningful.

CAMPAIGN 2008



War in Georgia is Bigger News than the Campaign

- Pew Research Center, August 19, 2008

by Mark Jurkowitz, Associate Director, Project for Excellence in Journalism

The fighting between Russia and Georgia was the biggest story in the U.S. media last week, marking the first week in nine months when the presidential race did not generate the most coverage, according to a new report from the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism. The conflict in the Caucasus, which raised the specter of a re-ignited Cold War, accounted for 26% of all the overall coverage last week, according to PEJ's weekly News Coverage Index for the week of Aug. 11-17. The campaign, at 21%, generated its lowest level of weekly

coverage since last December -- before the first caucus or primary vote was cast.

Obama Ready to Announce Running Mate – New York Times, August 18, 2008

Senator Barack Obama has all but settled on his choice for a running mate and set an elaborate rollout plan for his decision, beginning with an early morning alert to supporters, perhaps as soon as Wednesday morning, aides said.

Exclusive: McCain to name VP on Aug. 29 – Politico.com, August 18, 2008

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) plans to celebrate his 72nd birthday on Aug. 29 by naming his running mate at a huge rally in the battleground state of Ohio, Republican sources said.

GOING FOR THE BRONZE By Rhodes Cook. Center for Politics, August 14, 2008

Third parties to have an impact in '08?

When political reporters run low on topics to write about, they often turn their attention to third parties--the "lovable losers" of American politics. They never win at the presidential level but often are called upon to add color to campaigns that are sometimes badly in need of it. Not since 1972 has a third party actually won an electoral vote. Not since 1968 has an independent or third party candidate carried a state. What interest they draw is usually reserved for "celebrity candidates," which New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg would certainly have been if he had chosen to mount an independent candidacy in 2008.

Council on Foreign Relations – Issue Trackers

Issue Trackers provide summaries of presidential candidates' positions on an array of foreign policy issues facing the United States. They are updated regularly to reflect changes in candidates' stances. Candidates who have withdrawn from the race continue to be listed in these Issue Trackers, providing an archive of the debate on each subject.

The Candidates on Immigration - Council on Foreign Relations, August 11, 08

The rise of globalization, coupled with terrorism and security concerns have transformed immigration into an issue with foreign policy implications and major resonance for the 2008 presidential campaign.

The Candidates on U.S. Policy toward Russia - Council on Foreign Relations, August 11, 08

The next U.S. president will have to confront a deteriorating U.S.-Russia relationship.

Election Calendar



Republican National Convention

September 1-4, 2008,
Minneapolis -Saint Paul, Minnesota

Democratic National Convention

August 25-28, 2008
Denver, Colorado



ARTICLE ALERT

WHERE'S OBAMA'S PASSION? – By Joe Klein. TIME, August 21, 2008

A few days before Barack Obama was to announce his choice for Vice President, he was asked at a North Carolina town meeting what qualities he wanted in a running mate. He wandered through a derisive, if desultory, critique of Dick Cheney, then switched gears. [FULL TEXT](#)

HOW OBAMA WON THE NOMINATION – By Jay Cost. POLICY REVIEW, August & September 2008.

This essay will argue that Obama was favored by the delegate allocation system. In other words, Obama won not simply because he had more supporters, but also because the “rules of the game” made those supporters better at generating delegates. [FULL TEXT](#)

WHAT BUSH GOT RIGHT - By Fareed Zakaria. NEWSWEEK, August 18-25, 2008

For the next president, simply reversing this administration's policies is not the answer.

Fareed Zakaria's answers may surprise you... Compared with the flutters and flurries of the near-daily polls in the presidential race, one set of numbers has stayed fixed for months, even years. President George W. Bush now enters his 23rd consecutive month with an approval rating 32 percent. No matter what he does, or what happens in the world, the public seems to have decided that Bush has been a failure. [FULL TEXT](#)

BROTHERS IN ARMS – By Howard Fineman. NEWSWEEK, August 18-25, 2008

Obama and McCain are more alike than you think. In many ways, the differences between John McCain and Barack Obama could not be more vivid. One man is military to the core, the other as civilian as they come. One is a descendant of admirals, the other of a goatherd. One has been in Congress for 26 years, the other for three. [FULL TEXT](#)

RENEWING AMERICAN LEADERSHIP – By Barack Obama. FOREIGN AFFAIRS, July/August 2007

After Iraq, we may be tempted to turn inward. That would be a mistake. The American moment is not over, but it must be seized anew. We must bring the war to a responsible end and then renew our leadership -- military, diplomatic, moral -- to confront new threats and capitalize on new opportunities. America cannot meet this century's challenges alone; the world cannot meet them without America. [FULL TEXT](#)

Plus - [Google News](#) as well as [Yahoo News](#) on **Elections** updated continuously

UPCOMING EVENTS



[Live from the 2008 Political Conventions](#)

The 2008 Democratic and Republican party conventions represent the culmination of months of party primaries and caucuses, resulting in the selection of two official candidates for the U.S. presidency. Please join our daily webchats, coming to you live from the convention sites in Denver and Minneapolis.

We invite you to submit questions and comments to our special "rolling" webchat page. Then, on **August 25**, look for daily live events from each convention, during which our expert guest speakers will provide answers to your questions and their insights on the convention proceedings.

Join America.gov's elections experts - to discuss the people, processes and issues that shape the U.S. presidential race. They will answer your questions and talk about the latest events on the 2008 campaign trail.

[Enter Event & Ask Questions](#)

Date & Time: September 2, 2008, 09:00 a.m. EDT (1300 GMT)



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